

Ottawa

Crowds swell in downtown Ottawa again for 2nd weekend of protests

Ottawa police deploying more officers, counter-protest held at city hall

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Provincial flags fly on a rope as demonstrators protesting COVID-19 restrictions gather on Parliament Hill for the second weekend in Ottawa on Feb. 5, 2022. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)

The latest protest developments:

- ***Thousands return to streets for second weekend of truck convoy protest.***
- ***Police investigating more than 50 offences, including 11 hate crimes.***
- ***Macdonald-Cartier Bridge reduced to two lanes.***
- ***Ontario Premier Doug Ford says it's time for occupation of Ottawa to end.***
- ***The University of Ottawa vaccine clinic [is closed for the weekend](#).***
- ***City council will hold a special meeting on Monday.***

The crowd in downtown Ottawa has grown by thousands of protesters as the second weekend of demonstrations against COVID-19 public health mandates is now underway.

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has said it is deploying more officers and traffic controls this time around.

The force said Saturday it had responded to more than 400 calls since the start of the demonstration — which both Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson have called an "occupation" — and was investigating more than 50 criminal offences.

Eleven of those investigations involved hate crimes, with four people already charged, OPS said.

Ottawa Police 

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Police have responded to over 400 calls for service related to the demonstrations since they began.

In total, over 50 criminal offences are being investigated—11 of those were hate crimes which resulted in charges against four people. **#ottawa**
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Some protesters appear to have settled in, with bouncy castles, barbecues, wooden shacks and piles of food and fuel appearing in downtown streets and nearby parks.

An encampment has gone up at Confederation Park, including a wooden shack, a large stockpile of wood and a tent.

Downtown Ottawa remains a risky place to be, police said, and authorities are asking everyone to avoid the core if they can.



A person sells slices of pizza to other demonstrators in Ottawa as a protest against COVID-19 restrictions continues into its second week on Feb. 5, 2022. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

City 'under siege'

At an emergency meeting of the Ottawa Police Services Board on Saturday, board chair Coun. Diane Deans said the city was "under siege" and demanded a "concrete plan" to bring the demonstrations to an end.

"This group is emboldened by the lack of enforcement by every level of government. They are terrorizing our residents, torturing them with incessant honking, threatening them and preventing them from leading their lives," Deans said.

- [Protest nearly derailed boy's brain cancer treatment, mom says](#)
- [Women's shelter says clients, staff afraid to go outside amid protest](#)

"People cannot go to work or open their businesses. They cannot sleep, walk, shop, go to medical appointments or enjoy their neighborhood. This group is a threat to our democracy. What we're seeing is bigger than just a city of Ottawa problem. This is a nationwide insurrection. This is madness."

Even if these protests end, they would likely return in some form in the spring and summer, OPS Chief Peter Sloly told the board at the meeting.

"The fact of the matter is, we need more help," Sloly said. "We need an additional surge of resources."





Two protesters ride horses past parked trucks and Parliament Hill during a demonstration against COVID-19 restrictions, in Ottawa, Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022. (Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press)

Tone shift

Protesters' numbers dropped to a couple hundred during the week from what police estimated was around 8,000 people the first weekend.

They anticipate the protest will get a bump over the weekend of about 300 or 400 trucks and about 2,000 people on foot.

University of Ottawa political scientist Regina Bateson, who studies collective violence, has [warned there will be a tone shift this weekend](#) with fewer families and people concerned about vaccine mandates among the crowd.

Two men were seen on horseback at the protest this weekend, one holding a Canadian flag and the other holding a "Donald Trump 2024" flag. In a tweet, the Ottawa Humane Society said it had received reports of dogs and horses being brought to the protest.

The organization warned that prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures, loud noises and lack of adequate water or food could affect an animal's well-being. Road salt can also harm their hooves and paws, it said.

Ottawa Humane Society  · Feb 5, 2022



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(1/2) Reports are coming from downtown about dogs and horses that have been brought into the protest. For any animal, prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures, loud noises, road salt on paws or hooves, and inadequate access to food and water can threaten an animal's wellbeing.

Ottawa Humane Society 

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(2/2) To report animal cruelty and neglect, please contact the Ontario Animal Protection Call Centre at 1-833-9-ANIMAL (264625).

If an animal is alone in a parked car or is in immediate distress, please call 911.

1:02 PM · Feb 5, 2022



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After urging from police and politicians, many who'd planned counter-protests chose to call them off to avoid confrontations — but not all.

A crowd did gather in front of Ottawa City Hall regardless, with people carrying signs with slogans like "Bullies go home" and "We are not afraid."

- [Ottawa protest faces rising resident anger, uncertain finances in its 2nd week](#)
- [People are severing friendships over convoy protest, with some saying it shows 'true colours'](#)

Police had initially expected around 1,000 counter-protesters.





Counter-protesters opposed to a demonstration against COVID-19 restrictions that's severely disrupted life in Ottawa's downtown gather in front of Ottawa City Hall on Feb. 5, 2022. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

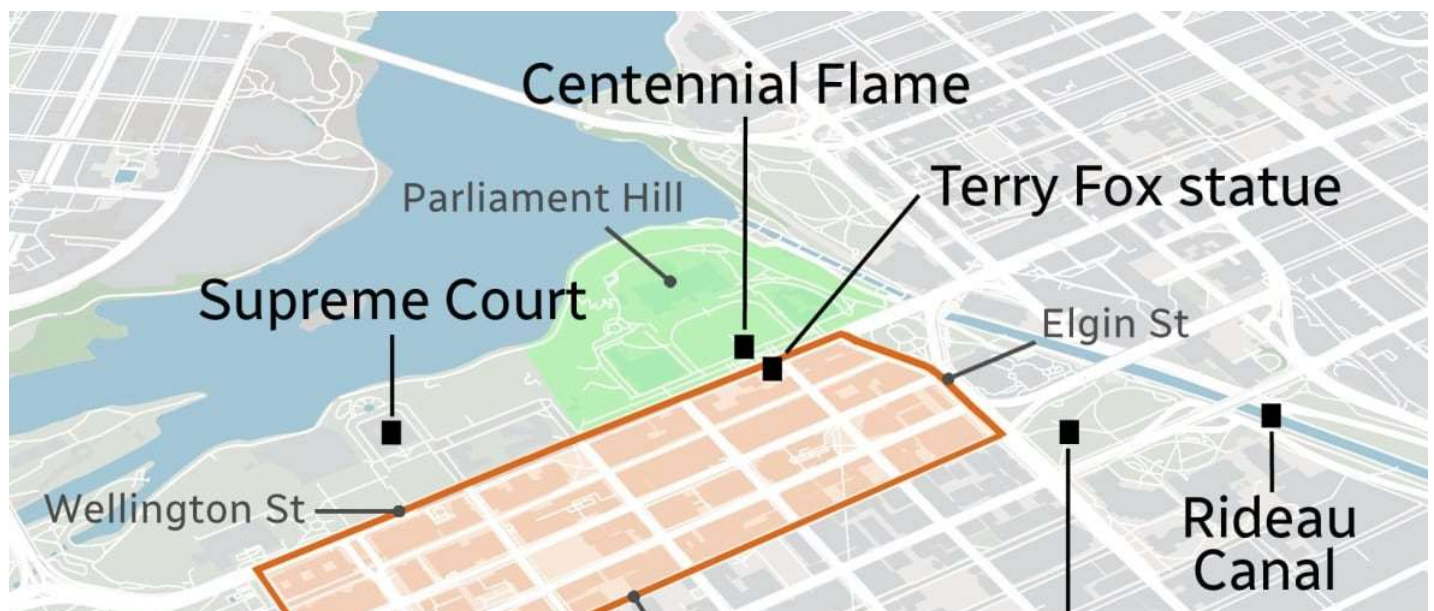
Community support urged instead

At a town hall Friday night, Joel Harden, the NDP MPP for Ottawa Centre, urged people to direct their energy to community support for the city's residents.

"When I hear people talking about the high price of housing, lack of employment, how much people suffered in the last two years. I feel that and we empathize with that," Harden said.

"What we do not empathize with are people shutting down our communities or attempting to make other people not feel safe."

Harden and a few city councillors had planned to walk the streets this weekend to patrol for bad behaviour and accompany people who felt unsafe walking alone, but the patrols were called off due to safety concerns.





The approximate area of ongoing anti-vaccine mandate protests in Ottawa. (CBC News)

Tickets issued

Sloly said in a Friday news conference police are trying isolate and contain people inside the "red zone" on Wellington Street in front of Parliament Hill.

- [Ottawa police launch 'surge and contain' strategy to manage protesters](#)

Ottawa's bylaw department, meanwhile, shared statistics Saturday about its ticketing efforts both inside and around the protest zone.

Between Jan. 28 and Feb. 3, officers ticketed 115 vehicles parked in no stopping and no parking areas inside the protest zone, plus 626 vehicles parked illegally elsewhere in the Centretown neighbourhood, according to a statement from bylaw department head Roger Chapman.

Another 28 vehicles associated with the protest were towed for blocking laneways and impeding traffic, Chapman said.

"The goal of parking enforcement within the perimeter of the demonstration is to ensure that emergency lanes are clear and the flow of traffic is maintained," he said. "All service requests related to the demonstration are being redirected to OPS."

Traffic disruptions remain throughout the downtown, with the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge reduced to two lanes in each direction. Traffic updates [can be found here](#).

A COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the University of Ottawa Minto Sports Complex will remain closed through the weekend, the city said. City hall, the Rink of Dreams and the Main and Rideau library branches are also off-limits once again.



Protesters, who came to Ottawa as part of a demonstration against COVID-19 mandates, camp out in Confederation Park. (Alexander Behne/CBC)

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